

# A WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOIN' ON:

## A REVIEW OF ENCOUNTERING THE SHAKERS OF THE NORTH FAMILY LOT, UNION VILLAGE, OHIO

by

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*Encountering the Shakers of the North Family Lot, Union Village, Ohio*. V. 1: *A Corner of Wisdom's Paradise — The North Family Lot Archaeological Project*, prepared by Bruce Aument and Andrew R. Sewell. V. 2: *A Clean and Lively Appearance — Landscape and Architecture of the North Family Lot*, prepared by Andrew R. Sewell, Roy A. Hampton III, and Rory Krupp. V. 3: *Tracing Prosperity ad Adversity — A Social History of the North Family Lot*, prepared by Andrew R. Sewell, Roy A. Hampton III, and Rory Krupp. V. 4: *Simplicity Comes in All Forms — The Shaker Ceramic Industries of Union Village*, prepared by Patrick M. Bennett, Thomas Grooms, Andrew R. Sewell, and Bruce Aument. Submitted by Hardlines Design Co. to Ohio Dept. of Transportation, Office of Environmental Services, January 30, 2009. Available online at: [http://www.dot.state.oh.us/DIVISIONS/TRANSSYS-DEV/ENVIRONMENT/Cultural\\_Resources/Pages/Shakers.aspx](http://www.dot.state.oh.us/DIVISIONS/TRANSSYS-DEV/ENVIRONMENT/Cultural_Resources/Pages/Shakers.aspx)

Capping a four year effort, the Environmental Services Division of the Ohio Dept. of Transportation (and the Federal Highway Administration) has shepherded the relatively major archaeological findings resulting from a relatively minor Section 106 highway project into an attractive, readable, and informative report that serves as a model of how CRM work should work and fully justifies, if any justification is needed, the expenditure of public funds on public archaeology (at least on this particular project). In addition to ODOT, the Ohio Historic Preservation Office, and Hardlines Design Co., the CRM firm which spearheaded the recovery effort, local groups such as the Western Shaker Study Group, the Warren County Historical Society, and the Otterbein Retirement participated in discussions and development of the Memorandum of Agreement necessary for data recovery.

*Encountering the Shakers of the North Family Lot* is a four volume study of a portion of the land occupied by the North Family of the 200 year old Shaker settlement of Union Village, near Lebanon, Warren County, Ohio specifically, of the portion impacted by removal of a century-old curve in State Route 741. Preliminary reports on the project were presented at the Midwest Archaeological Conference in Dayton, Ohio, October 20-23, 2005, but only abstracts of these presentations have been available heretofore (Aument 2005a, 2005b, Grooms 2005, Sewell 2005a, 2005b, Simpson 2005). Relatively few paper copies of Ohio Archaeologist

the final report have been produced but it is available to the public at several libraries and electronically at ODOT's web site. Because of the size of the files, it may take a while to download but is well worth the wait for anyone interested in Ohio historical archaeology.

The pioneer Shaker settlement at Union Village was formed under the impetus of charismatic Presbyterian Richard McNemar and became the nexus of Western Shakerism shortly after Ohio became a state, attaining a population of 600 residents by the early 1830s. The communal society experienced an influx of new converts through the ante-bellum period and the Civil War but began to decline during the 1870s. An increased reliance on hired laborers and tenant farmers forestalled the decline temporarily but in 1906 the Shakers living at the North Family Lot joined the Center Family, and in 1912 Union Village was sold, passing out of Shaker control.

In removing the Route 741 curve, ODOT, with the effort of Hardlines Design and associates has restored something of a sense of what life in 19th C. Union Village was like, and this report documents extremely important aspects of the archaeological and historical record.

One of the most impressive features of the North Family Lot project is the intensive archival research conducted by Roy A. Hampton III and Rory Krupp, as well as the degree to which this information has been integrated with the archaeological findings. This serves to demonstrate part of the reason that the results of major, collaborative CRM efforts may not be made available as quickly as the public might like. Just like archaeological excavation, archival investigation takes time and the two cannot, or at least should not, be conducted simultaneously. Casual checking on the Internet does suggest additional information is readily available on some of the North Family members. Luther Babbitt, for example, was apostatized in 1838 but his death date was not found; yet online searching quickly turns up not only his death date (1885) but the fact that there is a biographical sketch of him in Beer's *History of Warren County, Ohio*, an obituary in both the Lebanon Star and the Western Gazette, and even a photograph of the Lebanon Cemetery tombstone for him and wife Mary Duckworth, whom he wed in 1840. Babbitt was a carpenter by trade and his marriage so soon after leav-

ing Union Village may suggest at least part of the reason he departed. Another example is William Belmore, who with his mother disappears from Union Village in 1860; the same year, they appear in Jasper Co., Iowa, about fifty miles west of the famous Amana Colony, possibly a coincidence but an intriguing one.

This report demonstrates the importance of documenting and including not only archival research but also a detailed data recovery plan. It also documents the importance of remote sensing and geophysical survey in determining archaeological excavation and sampling. In an unusual and intriguing aspect of the research, relatively low-yield rubble fill from basements was sampled and the remainder systematically removed and "stockpiled" on the grounds of the Otterbein Retirement Homes' property, maintaining adequate provenience and preserving the material for possible future study.

One of the most significant archaeological aspects of the project is the discovery and documentation of the Union Village pottery manufacture. This is the first thorough excavation of an Ohio pottery of this period and although the actual kiln was not located, the report is extremely important in documenting its products, especially redware "Shaker" tobacco pipes and drain tile. The research is generally excellent, although the Sprucevale, Ohio, yellow ware pottery is erroneously placed in North Carolina, while the Moravian Mt. Shephard, North Carolina, redware pottery is placed in Ohio. A related reference to Genheimer's 1988 report on a Frankfort, Kentucky, redware pottery, is erroneously cited numerous times as his 1988 publication on the Bromley yellow ware pottery in Covington, Kentucky and is omitted from the bibliography.

A particularly intriguing feature of the Union Village ceramics is the dearth of fancy slip decorated redware so familiar in the eastern Pennsylvania and Shenandoah area. Whether this is typical of pioneer Ohio redware or a reflection of Shaker conservatism remains to be seen. In regard to the communal settlement's extreme conservatism, the manufacture of tobacco pipes raises the question of how closely the Shaker edict against smoking was honored; it is possible that all the pipes were all sold outside the community but unlikely. Similarly, the relative abundance of pig bones identified by Anne B. Lee (not to be confused with the Shaker foundress, Ann Lee)



in her faunal analysis suggests that the citizens of Union Village may also have skirted the Shaker edict against eating pork. Given the small sample size (total MNI=65) some of Lee's other inferences are a bit, dare we say, shakier, as is her continued misunderstanding of the correct use of the Latin abbreviation cf. in scientific nomenclature. Whatever one thinks as to how much or how little Shakers utilized undomesticated animals ("hunting"), given the mixed Historic Indian and European context of the ambiguous, compromised faunal data from Schoenbrunn, these cannot be used to support her argument (Murphy 2007).

Small sample size also handicaps the analyses of the archaeobotanical remains (Annette G. Ericksen) and the pollen and phytolith study (Linda Scott Cummings), although the latter report is particularly impressive in its scientific approach, clarity, and reluctance to strain for interpretation.

The Union Village report is marked throughout by attractive design and readability, with an effort to replace or at least translate archaeological jargon into layman's language. (The number of typographical and factual errors is minimal (Matanza, knawed, and palantine for palatine, confere for the Latin confer). Overall quality of the preliminary work, field work, and subsequent study makes this report a landmark in Ohio historical archaeology.

## References Cited

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2005a Preliminary Insights on Shaker Social Dynamics Reflected in Landscape Dynamics at Union Village in Warren County, Ohio. Paper presented at Midwest Archaeological Conference, Dayton, Ohio, October 20-23, 2005. Abstract available online at: <http://www.midwestarchaeology.org/2005Program.pdf>

2005b Unearthing Shaker History at the North Family Lot, Union Village in Warren County, Ohio. Paper presented at Midwest Archaeological Conference, Dayton, Ohio, October 20-23, 2005. Abstract available online at: <http://www.midwestarchaeology.org/2005Program.pdf>

Genheimer, Robert A.

1988 An Historical Archaeological Assessment of the East Main Street Phase II Project in Frankfort, Franklin County, Kentucky. Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., Lexington, Ky.

Grooms, Thomas

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2007 Faunal Remains from the Schoenbrunn Village, Tuscarawas County, Ohio. *Ohio Valley Historical Archaeology* 22: 69-78.

Sewell, Andrew R.

2005a Archaeology in Wisdom's Paradise: A Preliminary Report on a Phase III Data Recovery Project at the North Family Lot of Union Village, a Shaker Community in Warren County, Ohio. Paper presented at Midwest Archaeological Conference, Dayton, Ohio, October 20-23, 2005. Abstract available online at: <http://www.midwestarchaeology.org/2005Program.pdf>

2005b A Preliminary Shaker Brick Typology for Union Village, Warren County, Ohio. Paper presented at Midwest Archaeological Conference, Dayton, Ohio, October 20-23 2005. Abstract available online at: <http://www.midwestarchaeology.org/2005Program.pdf>

Preliminary findings of research into constructing a brick typology for Shaker buildings at Union Village, Ohio, the central community of Shakers in the western states during the nineteenth century. The brick typology was constructed from brick samples recovered during a Phase III data recovery project at the North Family Lot located at Union Village (Site 33WA407). The Union Village typology will be compared to a typology constructed for South Union, a Shaker community located in Kentucky. Differences in brick typologies between Shaker sites may give insight into differing levels of adherence to the 1821 Shaker Millennial Laws.

Simpson, Duane

2005 Integration of Geophysical Investigations and Archival Research at Site 33WA407, North Family Lot, of the Shaker Community at Union Village, Warren County, Ohio. Paper presented at Midwest Archaeological Conference, Dayton, Ohio, October 20-23, 2005. Abstract available online at: <http://www.midwestarchaeology.org/2005Program.pdf>



Figure 1. Aerial view of excavations at the North Family Lot in progress, May 2005, looking east. (Pottery shop located at right side of photograph).



Figure 2. A typical Shaker pipe from Union Village